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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 001278

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR A/S FRAZER, S/E WILLIAMSON, AND AF/SPG
NSC FOR PITTMAN AND HUDSON
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU

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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [UN](#) [AU](#) [SU](#)

SUBJECT: EASTERN FRONT: AMNA DIRAR DISCUSSES LEADERSHIP
CRISIS, NCP INFIGHTING

REF: A. KHARTOUM 1272

[1](#)B. KHARTOUM 1257

Classified By: A/CDA Mark Asquino, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: On August 20 polchief and poloff met with Dr. Amna Dirar, Presidential Advisor and Deputy Chairman of the Eastern Front. Dirar stated that she and other members of the Eastern Front had voted to suspend Chairman Musa Mohamed Ahmed because his decision to organize a conference for the Beja Congress presented a conflict of interest and a lamentable return to tribally-based political movements of the past. She speculated that his actions were encouraged by the National Congress Party (NCP), who she accused of seeking to create discord among Eastern Front members. The NCP itself is fraught with internal problems, she said, describing the power struggle between Presidential Assistant Nafie Ali Nafie and Vice President Ali Osman Taha. She claimed VP Taha is close to Ahmed and speculated that they have struck a deal for elections support in exchange for development in the East. With regard to national elections, Dirar believes they will not occur until the Darfur crisis is resolved, but is not optimistic about the latter prospect. In Eastern Sudan, she stated that the humanitarian situation on the ground remains precarious with dire shortages of food. She said as a result of the lack of implementation the Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement (ESPA), she has come to believe that the GOS has no interest in developing the East, and that development must come from outside. To that end, she urged that USG sanctions on Sudan be eased for the East in a manner similar to the situation in the South. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Dirar stated that upon the formation of the Eastern Front as a political party, it was agreed that its members would not hold dual leadership positions. (Note: Formed in 2005, the Eastern Front is a coalition of former rebels who signed the Eastern Sudan Peace Agreement (ESPA) with the GOS in 2007. It is comprised of Beja Congress, representing the non-Arab Beja tribe, and the Free Lions, representing the Arab Rashaida tribe, as well as several smaller organizations. End Note.) Ahmed's decision to organize a conference for the Beja Congress had violated that principle, she said. "Either you select the Beja Congress as your political party, or the Eastern Front, but you can't have both," she stated, adding that either option was acceptable. As a result, she and other leaders convened and voted to suspend his leadership until he committed to one party or the other. Dirar said she was also dismayed with Ahmed's decision to resurrect the Beja Congress because it represented a return to tribally-based political movements of the past. Even the name of the Beja Congress was anachronistic, she said, noting how other opposition movements such as the SPLM

and the SLM have adopted more expansive and inclusive names with no allusion to tribes. "I keep telling him that what was acceptable in the 1960s is not acceptable in 2008," she stated. By contrast, the Eastern Front was formed to represent all peoples of the East without regard to tribal origins, she said.

13. (C) Dirar stated that she has not yet received a reaction from Ahmed about his suspension from the Eastern Front, save the announcement that she and others had been expelled from the Beja Congress. She characterized this as a meaningless reprisal by Ahmed, noting that she had forfeited her membership in the Beja Congress to join the Eastern Front. "He knows I'm not a member of the Beja Congress anymore," she said. Ahmed has called an Eastern Front central committee meeting for September 10, but did not consult the central committee before doing so, she said. Up to now, she stated that no other attempts have been made to resolve the leadership crisis. When queried by polchief about the reaction of Rashaida leaders to the crisis in the Eastern Front, Dirar replied that they were likely still evaluating their options. She said it was possible that the Rashaida, who have few land rights in the East, might break out of the Eastern Front to form their own party in order to procure financial support from Rashaida groups in other countries, particularly Libya.

14. (C) Dirar said she believes the leadership crisis in the Eastern Front was engineered by the NCP. "Their fingerprints are all over this," she stated. She speculated that Vice President Ali Osman Taha, who heads the ESPA implementation committee, had encouraged Ahmed to convene the Beja Congress

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conference in an attempt to divide the Eastern Front. Taha has Presidential ambitions, she noted, and claimed he is courting leaders like Ahmed by portraying himself as the regime's best representative of marginalized people. It's possible that he's directed funding towards Ahmed and the Beja Congress, she said. Dirar stated that Taha's actions are part of a broader power struggle within the NCP between Taha and Presidential Advisor Nafie Ali Nafie. She added Taha's presidential ambitions date back to his engineering the removal of Hassan Al-Turabi from the National Islamic Front in 1998, but that "he never expected Bashir would stay on ten more years." Nafie probably has ambitions of his own, she said, and as for Bashir, "I think he's very lonely right now," joking that he has only his secretary to talk to.

15. (C) With regard to elections, Dirar was pessimistic that they would happen as scheduled, noting that both the NCP and SPLM are better off maintaining the status quo. Furthermore, elections are not possible without the resolution of the Darfur crisis. Dirar believes that the root of the Darfur crisis can be found in the introduction of non-indigenous Arab tribes to the region, but that the best thing for the rebels to do now was unite in opposition to the government. She acknowledged the difficulty of that proposition given the personalities involved, noting, "I've met Abdul Wahid many times (in Eritrea), and he is not easy" to deal with. She questioned the regime's resolve to find a solution in Darfur, noting that it had found money to compensate people for their forced resettlement away from the Merowe dam, but had yet to commit to any form of compensation to Darfuris.

16. (C) Dirar stated that despite the signing of the ESPA, the East remains marginalized and underdeveloped because the promised funds have not appeared. Only \$25 million of the \$125 million committed for the fiscal year has been allocated, she said, and the rest seemed unlikely to materialize. "It's simply not enough," she said. She stated that as a result, she has come to believe that the GOS has no intention of developing the East. Development must come from outside investment. She urged that the USG ease sanctions on the East as it has for the South to help facilitate investment. "If we can achieve that, it will be a great

help."

17. (C) Comment: Dirar's decision to take on Ahmed may have been ill-advised, as Ahmed was recently elected to a four-year term as Chairman of the Beja Congress and appears to enjoy support from within the NCP. Her task is made even more difficult as a female politician in the male-dominated politics of both Khartoum and the East. While the Eastern Front is in no imminent danger of collapsing, the troubled relationship between two of its most prominent leader remains a cause for concern. Our meeting with Eastern Front Chairman Ahmed will be reported septel.
ASQUINO